

Virginia Triple Anvil Race Report Dan Grodinsky ~ 21 October 2014

Take-away from last week's Triple Anvil in Virginia: I thought I'd let an audience of endurance athletes know some of the things that worked for me and what didn't over a very long triathlon. A good portion of this would likely apply to other events so take from it what you will.

One of the main take-aways is that you don't need the finest of gear or the fanciest of nutritional products to finish a race like this. You simply need to be dedicated to the task at hand, and committed to finishing no matter how much pain you might be in. That being said, chocolate-covered espresso beans help.

Hydration: Temperatures were cool and you were never far from your tent so keeping hydrated was not an issue. I switched between Nunn electrolyte water and my home-made "Michael Jordan Secret Stuff" [Space Jam reference, FTW]. It's basically a jug of water with a ton of honey, some Gator Lyte unflavored electrolytes, and lemon juice. It has worked fine for me. I find I digest it better than other products, including Perpetuem.

Shoes: I used an old, beat up pair of grey Nike running shoes. I don't know the model. I do know that I did most of my training with them, and then ran three marathons on them. Worked fine. I probably could have purchased a fancy pair of running shoes but...meh [shrugs shoulders].

Sleep Deprivation: Dealing with no sleep this time was more difficult than it normally was. I suspect it was because I started sleeping more than my normal 5 hours as a result of the triathlon training. I would probably incorporate more sleep deprivation training next time. I took two 20 minute naps on the first night, and two 5 minute naps on the second night. These were on Andy's advice, and they really helped as I felt a lot fresher afterwards. I also found that Red Bulls and 5hr Energies weren't really helping me much. The best thing for me was plain ol' black coffee.

I also hallucinated a lot of faces, billboards for non-existent ice cream brands, and violent LARP-ing battle royales in downtown L.A. and/or Albuquerque. Not sure which.

Swim: Steady, consistent swimming will keep you going forever. I finished the 7.2 miles and felt great; I could have gone a lot further. I had a gel and a couple of sips of water every 45 minutes and that was enough for me. I'm still blown away by Dr. Beat (1st overall) who was chugging pineapple Fanta every lap.

Bike: I bought a low-end road bike last June. Before that, I had an old pink steel thing called the Pink Lady. Hence, I am no cyclist. It showed since I neither used Aero bars, nor do I even own a cycling shirt. More time on the bike in training would have been useful, but frankly, you just have to get it done.

How to avoid awful saddle sores when riding long distance: Courtesy of Olof's bag of tricks, take one pair of cycling shorts, apply Chamois Butter super-liberally. Wear the same shorts for the whole time. Re-apply from time to time. Use a hazmat team to wash said shorts.

Run: I tend to run on trails. Running on asphalt was a significant change, and I think that it was what led to the Achilles pain and the pain on the top of my feet. Next time I would spend more training time on asphalt to habituate to the conditions more. I also did an ok job of alternating between a fast(ish) walk on the uphill's and running faster when I could muster it. But the biggest tip is also the simplest: just keep moving forward.

Crews: They are both essential and dangerous. You need to be really strict about using them as a resource (getting food, switching bottles, etc.) without stopping too long each lap. After a long stretch it feels great just to talk to someone new for a bit. That being said, the conversations with my brother Rob, with Andy, and with plenty of others made the race memorable.

Tracking Progress: I quickly and deliberately lost track of what lap I was on. This allowed me to mentally accept that I had, for example, a minimum of 24 hours on the bike. Same thing with the run. This approach worked really well for me as I was able to simply accept that I would keep going until it was done, without having to wrestle mentally with how slow the laps were adding up.

Foot care: Trail Toes foot cream and Injinjis have been the best combination I've come across to avoid blisters. I had one on my heel, but all told, it didn't bug me much. This was despite a lot of rain.

That's what I got. Take from this what you will.